

Amendments to the Claims:

The following Listing of Claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

1 - 10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently amended) A method of preventing reducing nosocomial infections, comprising:

providing a swab applicator comprising a handle having a frangible tip and a sponge disposed about the frangible tip, wherein the handle contains a disinfectant comprising chlorhexidine gluconate;

separating at least a portion of the tip from the handle such that the disinfectant contacts the sponge; and

contacting an area of the patient's mucosa with the sponge;

wherein the area of the patient's mucosa is at least one selected from the group consisting of the gingival, the buccal mucosa, the floor of the mouth, the hard palate, the soft palate, the dorsal tongue, the lateral tongue, the ventral tongue, and an oropharyngeal surface.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the frangible tip is scored.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11, further comprising inserting an endotracheal tube into the patient's trachea such that is in contact with the area of the patient's mucosa.

14. (Canceled)

15. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the disinfectant comprises an alcoholic solution containing chlorhexidine gluconate.

16. (New) The method of claim 15, wherein the alcoholic solution is a low viscosity alcoholic solution.

17. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the volume of the sponge is less than 8 cm³.